

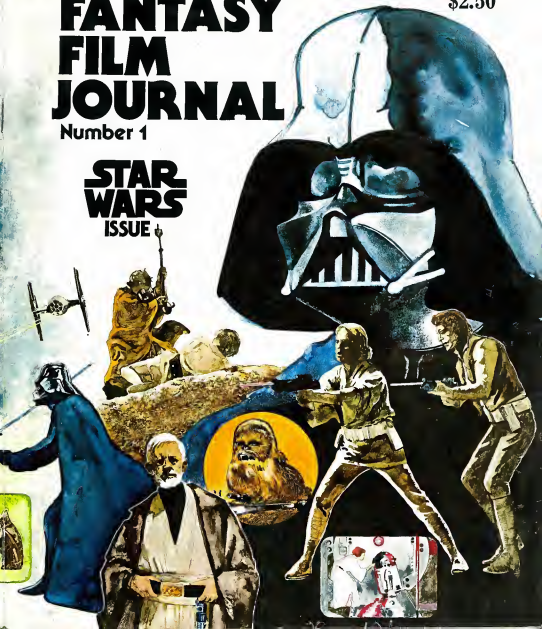
EXCLUSIVE STAR WARS INTERVIEW: JOHN DYKSTRA

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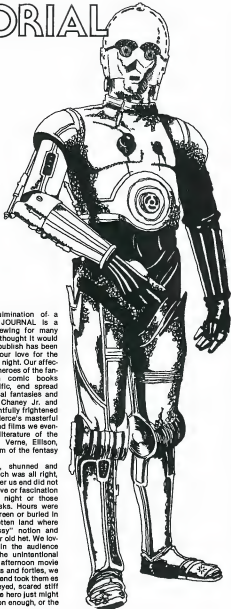
FANTASY FILM JOURNAL

Number 1

**STAR
WARS**
ISSUE



EDITORIAL



Welcome to the culmination of a dream. FANTASY FILM JOURNAL is a dream that has been brewing for many years, although we never thought it would come true. The desire to publish has been growing steadily as has our love for the things that go bump in the night. Our affection for the creatures and heroes of the fantasy world began with comic books - SUPERMAN to be specific, and spread from there to the Universal fantasies and horrors; Kariott, Lugosi, Chaney Jr. and Lorre. We were both delightfully frightened and fascinated by Jack Pierce's masterful creations. From comics and films we eventually graduated to the literature of the genre; Bredbury, Asimov, Verne, Ellison, Stoker, and any other realm of the fantasy world.

We grew up alone, shunned and taunted by our peers, which was all right, really; they had little to offer us and did not understand or share our love or fascination for the creatures of the night or those heroes in tights and masks. Hours were spent before the silver screen or buried in the pages of some forgotten land where romance was not a "sissy" notion and horror was not forgotten or old hat. We loved serials; while others in the audience hooped and howled at the unintentional humor in those Saturday afternoon movie comic books of the thirties and forties, we watched them re-run on tv and took them as seriously as they were played, scared stiff that maybe this chapter the hero just might not jump from that car soon enough, or the

explosion in that cave got him that time! As children, our minds were beautifully corrupted and fortunately we have never grown up, in spirit at least. Children today are to be pitied, for they don't have the serials, Saturday afternoons, heroes, Hopalong or the Universal horror films. It is partly for this reason that we have labored, out of love, to put together FANTASY FILM JOURNAL; to bring some of that magic and heroism to light again, so that what was, can still be. The world of today has its own heroes and films, but they are few and far between, but we plan to include them in our efforts, also. We have labored for those who are growing up today and those who grew with us, who are still youngsters and wish to remain so.

FANTASY FILM JOURNAL is an informal magazine designed for the enjoyment and discussion of fantasy, science fiction and horror in films. Fantasy is the umbrella under which we shall place all three categories - fantasy, science fiction and horror - just to simplify matters, hence our title, instead of the rather long-winded "Fantasy, Science Fiction and Horror Journal". We shall deal largely with the films of today and the past decade, but we hope to rekindle the love and enjoyment of serials, the horror golden age of the thirties and forties, and the science fiction era of the fifties. We hope to touch all bases.

We began as fans wanting to produce a "fanzine". For those of you unfamiliar with the term, a fanzine is a magazine produced by fans, for fans, with no intention of making money, but just for the sheer enjoyment of it. Generally fanzines are crude, not well designed or written, with typewriter copy and more drawings than photos. Today's fandom is becoming more ambitious as fans and dealers hope to make a tidy profit off of the demand for more and more fan material. A number of offset printed magazines have appeared over the past two years, varied in the quality of design and generally poorly written. We hope to improve somewhat on the fanzine by presenting a better quality design and in time presenting quality writing. But what we most want to bring to you, the fantasy fan, is the same love with which you view the films about which we write. We wish to add to the literature of the genre, the true love and fascination the fantasy fan possesses. We want to give you an hour or so of enjoyment; to reflect upon your favorite fifties science fiction film, your favorite Saturday afternoon, your favorite serial, your favorite Universal classic. We hope to touch your excitement gland, and get those juices going!

We want your response to our efforts, as well as any contributions you might feel worthy. While we do not solicit material, we welcome it just make sure to include a self-addressed stamped envelope for the return of the material to you, but we are not responsible in any way for the material. Let us hear from you.

Now, settle back, get a glass of tea, put on the soundtrack to STAR WARS and read. And enjoy.

Thomas A. Johnson

Thomas A. Johnson
Editor

FANTASY FILM JOURNAL

Volume 1, Number 1
Winter 1977-78



PUBLISHERS
Steve Williams
Thomas A. Johnson
S.W. Jones, III

EDITOR & ART DIRECTOR
Thomas A. Johnson

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
S.W. Jones, III

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
Louis Armour

CONTRIBUTORS
Steve Williams
S.W. Jones, III
Louis Armour
Bob Friedland
Michael Hogan
Claude Saxon
John Thomas

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We wish to say a very special thanks to several people, without whom FANTASY FILM JOURNAL might not have happened: Louis Armour (who has done more than we could have asked), William Speer (who got the whole thing going, bringing us together with John Dykstra), Leroy Busch (whose enthusiasm was rewarding), Tom Donahue of Paramount Pictures, Jake Campbell of Carter Printing, J.B. Cobb (for his help and kind advice), Dennis Freeman, Elton Holland of the Malco Theatres, and of course, John Dykstra.

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We wish to apologize for being a month late with this first issue, but our efforts to bring you a good magazine required the extra time. We trust the wait was worthwhile.

REVIEW: STAR WARS

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away...



Twentieth Century Fox Presents A Lucasfilm Ltd. Production **STAR WARS**
Starring **MARK HAMILL HARRISON FORD CARRIE FISHER**
PETER CUSHING
and
ALEC GUINNESS

Written and Directed by **GEORGE LUCAS** Produced by **GARY KURTZ** Music by **JOHN WILLIAMS**



PARAMOUNT PANAVISION PRINTS BY DE LUXE TECHNICON

Original Motion Picture Soundtrack by John Williams



Making Fine Sound Better



© 1977 Twentieth Century Fox

the editor reviews the most visually stunning space fantasy—science fiction epic in the history of the genre!



STAR WARS - Twentieth Century Fox release, produced by Gary Kurtz. Written and directed by George Lucas; camera (Technicolor prints by Deluxe) Gilbert Taylor; second unit camera, Carroll Ballard; editors, Paul Hirsch, Marcia Lucas, Richard Chew; music, John Williams; production design, John Barry; art direction, Norman Reynolds; Leslie Dilley; set decoration, Roger Christian; sound (Dolby), Don McDougall; Bob Minkler, Ray West, Mike Minkler, Les Fresholtz; Richard Portman, Derek Ball, Stephen Katz; costumes—wardrobe, John Mollo, Ron Beck; stunt coordinator, Peter Diamond. Running time: 121 mins. (MPAA rating: PG)

ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION CREDITS

Special photographic effects supervisor, John Dykstra; special production and mechanical effects supervisor, John Stears; production supervisor, Robert Watts; production illustration, Ralph McQuarrie; special dialogue and sound effects, Ben Burtt; sound editors, Sam Shaw, Robert R. Rutledge, Gordon Davidson, Gene Corso.

MINIATURE AND OPTICAL EFFECTS CREDITS

First camera, Richard Edlund; composite optical photography, Paul Blalock (Praxis); optical photography, Paul Roth; animation and roto-scope design, Adam Beckett; stop-motion animation, Jon Berg, Philip Tapet.

CAST

Luke Skywalker..... Mark Hamill
Han Solo..... Harrison Ford
Princess Leia Organa..... Carrie Fisher
Grand Moff Tarkin..... Peter Cushing
Ben Kenobi..... Alec Guinness
C3PO..... Anthony Daniels
R2D2..... Kenny Baker
Chewbacca..... Peter Mayhew
Lord Darth Vader..... David Prowse
Uncle Owen Lars..... Phil Brown
Aunt Beru Lars..... Shelagh Fraser
Chief Jawa..... Jack Purvis
Rebel Generals..... Alex McCrindle,
Eddie Byrnes

Imperial Military

Chiefs..... Don Henderson,
Richard LeParmentier,
Leslie Schofield
Rebels..... Drew Henley, Dennis Lawson,
Garrick Hagon, Jack Klaff,
William Hootkins, Angus McInnis,
Jeremy Sinden, Graham Ashley

It is no surprise by now that the biggest hit of the year is **STAR WARS**, becoming within a month of its release, a legend. Cults have sprung up around it. Mr. Spock has been knocked off of his pedestal and replaced by an eight foot half-bail, a wookie named Chewbacca. **VARIETY** called **STAR WARS** an "outstanding adventure fantasy" with a "huge outlook"; **Rex Reed** called it a masterpiece; **TIME** called it the best film of the year. The praise from the nation's critics has been incredible, with only a few brave souls daring to be negative. One reason for shouting in the science fiction corner, other than the brilliance of the film, is that the public and critics have taken a genre film to their collective bosoms, brought new respectability to a science fiction film and insured for the future a steady stream of genre films - promises made by **LOGAN'S RUN** and **KING KONG** but not realized due to poor acceptance by the public for poor productions.

Speaking of **KONG 76**, it is amusing to think that for almost a solid year prior to its release the public was subjected to pompous bally-hoo and absurd hype for what turned out to be a dud film and for Paramount pictures a failure. However, **STAR WARS**, with a tight shroud of secrecy around it, almost sneaked in. **STAR WARS** was made for less than half of what was budgeted for **KONG** and contained more believable and many more effects, perhaps teaching **Dino** a well deserved lesson.

It is almost cliché by now to say that **STAR WARS** is magnificent. Writer-director George Lucas set out to make the most exciting film adventure he could and that he did. The only negative criticism from this reviewer is that it wasn't twice as long, for the film is pure magic and filled with an awesome sense of wonder that fills the viewer with an almost unheard of exhilaration upon viewing it.

For years science fiction lovers have hoped for an adventure fantasy of the scale conceived by E.E. "Doc" Smith - intergalactic war, aliens from a thousand worlds, dog-fights between spacecraft - In other words a special effects tour-de-force. **STAR WARS** owes its success to the past as does few films, being deeply rooted in the space opera of the past. Flash Gordon did it first, but George Lucas has thrilled today's audiences as Flash Gordon could never do. **STAR WARS** is a rousing adventure greatly influenced by fiction of the pulps, Flash Gordon, westerns, and Errol Flynn swashbuckling. Befitting the adventurous flavor of the film is a brilliant musical score reminiscent of Korngold, by **JAWS** composer John Williams.

In its review, **VARIETY** summed up **STAR WARS'** success very well:

"STAR WARS is a magnificent film. George Lucas set out to make the biggest possible adventure fantasy out of his memories of serials and older action epics, and he has succeeded brilliantly.

Like a breath of fresh air, STAR WARS sweeps away the cynicism that has in recent years obscured the concepts of valor, dedication and honor. Make no mistake - this is by no means a 'children's film,' with all the derogatory overtones that go with that description. This is instead a superior example of what only the screen can achieve, and closer to home, it is another of what only Hollywood can put on the screen."

It is a brilliant adventure space-fantasy that is bringing the masses to science fiction. For this we can be grateful to George Lucas, for he has paved the way for science fiction films to come. We can be grateful to him for making a film just for those of us who love the genre. It is so beautiful and works so incredibly well that we must conclude it was made just for us, on our specifications. It was a labor of love by all concerned and it shows. Stanley Kubrick brought science fiction to the attention of the public with 2001, but his was a cold, clinical outer space with such a deadpan serious approach that many people were turned off by the film. Kubrick's world was an unglamorous one populated by people equally unglamorous. No one cared about the characters created by Kubrick and Arthur C. Clarke.

The real interest and fascination of the film lay in the magnificent special effects and the idea of alien intelligences contacting mankind. Two-dimensional spacecraft and two-dimensional characters. Kubrick made a great show, but Lucas made not only a great show, but a great entertainment.

Lucas first conceived of STAR WARS as early as 1971 when he decided he wanted to film a space fantasy. Only then he wanted to do FLASH GORDON. When the owners of the Gordon character demanded too much money, Lucas went back to the basics to create his own character and story. He began writing STAR WARS in January 1973 after the completion of his second film, AMERICAN GRAFFITI. Being a science fiction fan and collector, Lucas had done THX 1138 as his first film, the result of a short film done while in college. THX 1138, while not commercially successful, has been recognized by the science fiction community as the excellent film it is - a coldly terrifying look at the future.

Universal, who released GRAFFITI, refused the STAR WARS outline presented by Lucas, as being too far out and expensive to film, so Lucas searched for financial backing elsewhere, finding it finally from Twentieth Century Fox. Twentieth Century has in the past twenty-five years produced the bulk of quality science fiction and fantasy films, and will be the subject of a future article.

After completing the script, the job of creating the look of STAR WARS began. Colin Cantwell, who had worked on 2001 was hired to design the initial spacecraft models. Ralph McQuarrie, production illustrator, began to visualize the actual look and feel of the film - characters, costumes, props, scenery - which was finally realized as a series of paintings. Those production paintings, by the way, are scheduled for publication and release near Christmas.

Tatooline, the dry desert home of Luke Skywalker and Obi-Wan Kenobi, was found in Tunisia. The moon of Yavin was found in Guatemala. Many of the interior sets were to be quite large, so production facilities near North Africa's Tunisian locations were sought. Chosen was EMI Elstree Studios in Borehamwood, England, which has recently been enjoying an unusual amount of filming activity. The STAR WARS company com-

manded almost the entire facility. The studio is currently playing host to the multi-million dollar production, SUPERMAN, where, incidentally, Superman's home planet Krypton was scheduled to have been blown up last May.

Needless to say, an enormous number of miniature and optical effects were called for in STAR WARS. Lucas, who enjoys complete control over his films, had definite ideas about the needed effects. He knew what he wanted and knew it would be difficult to maintain his strong control if he went to an established effects genius such as Doug Trumbull, the recognized genius behind 2001, ANDROMEDA STRAIN, SILENT RUNNING, and the forthcoming CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND. The answer was to put together his own equipment and personnel, which would be more efficient for what he wanted, and much cheaper. Cost was an important point with this film. Costing eventually about ten million dollars, Lucas was very conscious of where the money went. Despite the high budget, there never seemed to be enough money. In an interview in the April, 1977 issue of AMERICAN FILM, Lucas states:

"Although it costs a lot of money, it's still a low budgeted picture...We still don't have the luxury of a big movie - time, doing things right. Everything is compromise, cutting corners, not doing this or that. You suffer. You say, 'I can't do this,' or 'That looks terrible, but we'll go with it,' which you are normally doing on a \$7,000,000 picture..."

Kubrick had more money, more buying power in those days, but Lucas created, except for minor flaws not worth mentioning, effects equal in quality to those in 2001. If not technically better, the effects are certainly more exciting and brilliant in their execution. Stationary or two-dimensional





views of planets and spacecraft in 2001 are fine and upon first viewing, exciting, but after at least twenty viewings of STAR WARS, I STILL thrill to the opening shots of the Empire battleship passing over our heads in hot pursuit of the Rebel blockade runner, or the Millennium Falcon backing out of the Death Star and making a one hundred eighty degree turn to speed away. Kubrick gave his audiences the eeriness, grandeur, loneliness and reality of space, but Lucas gave us the adventure and overwhelming possibilities of space travel, each member of the audience wanting to board and help the Rebels.

To do his effects, Lucas hired John Dykstra to supervise his effects company, the Industrial Light and Magic Corporation, set up in a warehouse in the San Fernando Valley. Creating new techniques and equipment, using computers and electronics in creating special effects, employing as many as seventy-five people, ILM executed three hundred and sixty separate special effects shots for the film. Effects and opticals are visible for half of the running time of STAR WARS.

John Barry (not the noted film music composer) designed the beautiful and elaborate sets and props. Ralph McQuarrie, art director Norman Reynolds and sculptress Liz Moore designed the golden tin-man C3PO. Other robots and production and mechanical effects were designed by John Stears, who also came up with the beautiful light sabres seen much too briefly in the film.

The music, as mentioned earlier, is brilliantly old-fashioned. Uplifting, heroic, romantic and adventurous. It is, if you've been living in a cave, available in an unusual two-record soundtrack album (and on tape), complete with detailed notes on the music, color photos from the film, and a poster by illustrator John Berkey (Berkey did the KING KONG 76 poster artwork). The album is THE soundtrack of the year and a must for soundtrack collectors and everyone who loves the film. Listening to it is a joy and as much fun as viewing the movie.

CASTING was inspired as each member of the cast carries out his part with the full spirit and seriousness the film requires. Lending a regal respectability to their roles are Alec Guinness as Ben Kenobi and Peter Cushing as Grand Moff Tarkin. It is nice to see Cushing in a film that will be seen by a completely different audience than those to which he is already known. After so many years in genre films, horror and schlock films, he deserves the exposure. One interesting note concerning casting is that David Prowse, who twice played the Frankenstein monster in Hammer's Frankenstein series, is behind the mask of Darth Vader, but totally uncredited is the enormously talented voice of James Earl Jones. His is a masterfully evil voice for Lord Darth Vader.

The plot of the film is basically a simple one, a fairy tale of sorts - the film even begins with an altered version of "Once



OPPOSITE PAGE: A production painting by Ralph McQuarrie depicting Luke and the droids overlooking Mos Eisley. **TOP THIS PAGE:** The droids watch as rebels defend themselves against Imperial attackers. **BOTTOM:** Harrison Ford as Han Solo.



upon a time..." (A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away...). Although the plot may be simple, it is not simple-minded as some critics suggest. The plot is universal - the fight for freedom. Some have criticized STAR WARS for not being more complicated or ingenious in its plot, but I wonder what is "heavier" than man's eternal fight for freedom? What country or group of people on this earth has not concerned itself with that fight? Wars in our own world have been fought (are still being fought) for that one right - freedom. The plot may be simple, and the film an adventurous excursion into fantasy, but the plot is far from simple-minded.

George Lucas has created a masterpiece, already recognized as a classic. He has fully realized alien worlds, their cultures and inhabitants. His world and the action therein actually lives and breathes for its audience. He has led his actors and robots through their paces with such brilliance and joined live action with opticals and effects and miniatures in such a way that the viewer is totally absorbed with the film and is never conscious of Hollywood "make-believe".

The script, written by Lucas, is geared for maximum action and minimum complexity, but that is not to say the script is a bit of fluff. Lucas has created different cultures throughout STAR WARS by implication, allowing the audience to create within its own mind the backgrounds of each alien culture. He has enriched his story with technology, a minimum of plot complications, numerous and complex alien creatures, all without unnecessary explanations and dialogue. Little information is given about Chewbacca, but who has not left the theater without feeling he knows the wookiee intimately?

The story is an action-filled one but it has a series of subplots that serve to flesh out the characters and make the events in the film seem real. The main action concerns the rebellion and the efforts to destroy the Death Star, the capture and rescue of the Princess, bringing about the said destruction of the Death Star. We come to know a young man determined to leave his boring life as a farmer when it seems his uncle has been hindering his leaving, even after all his friends have succeeded in escaping. Ben Kenobi is linked to Luke's own past as Ben and Luke's father were friends, serving together in the service of the then good and peaceful Empire, until one evil young Jedi Knight, Darth Vader, betrayed his compatriots and was directly responsible for the death of Luke's father. The film moves quickly, but it is detail such as this that serves to flesh out the seemingly simple story line, making it more than a rehash of FLASH GORDON.

STAR WARS could not succeed without the brilliance and careful integration of well done special effects. Effects that were believable and did not make the audience aware they were watching miniatures, were crucial to this film. Supervised by John Dykstra, the effects were incredible, and are described in more detail by Dykstra himself in the interview elsewhere in this issue. For that reason we shall

TOP: David Prowse as Darth Vader. BOTTOM: Disguised as Imperial stormtroopers, Luke and Han escort Chewbacca to the detention area in the heart of the Death Star in their effort to rescue Princess Leia.



OPPOSITE PAGE TOP: A Tuskan Raider atop an alaphant disguised as a Bantha. BOTTOM: Chewbacca and Han Solo in an action pose.

bypass any explanations of effects in this review, except to say they were beautiful and fascinating.

STAR WARS has turned into a completely unexpected phenomenon, capturing the critics, the public, merchandisers, and even the makers of the film, by surprise. The film is expected to overtake JAWS and become the highest grossing film of all time, for its success will not stop at that point, for at least two sequels are planned. It was planned from the beginning that if the first was successful, two sequels, one in 1979 and the other in 1983, would be filmed. At this time all the principal actors, save Alec Guinness, have commitments to do the sequels. Lucas, according to interviews, plans to produce the sequels, possibly directing the third, so perhaps the STAR WARS sequels will not fall prey to that disease that infects and disables most sequels to popular and successful films. Few sequels have been the equal in quality and popularity to the original.

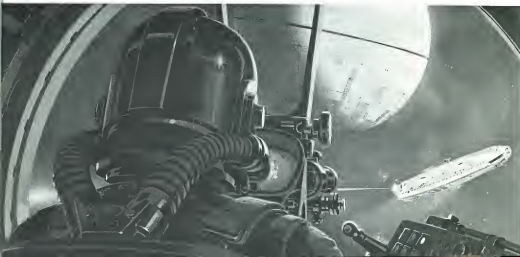
Burned by their merchandising experience with Dino's KONG, few merchandisers were interested in STAR WARS, prior to its release. However, merchandisers were knocking down the doors as the STAR WARS phenomenon reared its lucrative head. By Christmas the public will see tee-shirts, iron-ons, countless magazines, home movie condensations, buttons, posters, comic adaptations, souvenir programs, less than original versions of the music, completely detailed head-masks (of Darth Vader, a stormtrooper, Chewbacca, and C3PO), blueprints of equipment and spacecraft, quality books concerning the making of the film (including the actual script), a portfolio of color stills used to sell the film prior to its release, a novelized sequel by Alan Dean Foster, a 1978 calendar, Halloween costumes, and of course a complete line of toys and plastic models. If that isn't enough, one might purchase, if one has the right connections, color transparencies from the film or an actual model used, for models and six thousand transparencies

were stolen from the company some time back. However, it might be noted that such a transaction is highly illegal.

STAR WARS was, and still is, the most exciting thing to happen to the world of fantasy since 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY, but promises to be the key to the door, unlocking many new and exciting surprises for the future. We have often felt that if someone spent some money, and wisely too, took the time, and treated the subject with healthy respect, that a good, exciting space fantasy could be filmed and enjoyed by the public. Too often a fantasy film was given a very small budget, to do effects requiring a very large budget, given third-rate actors, a director who cannot direct and knows nothing of the genre, and improper distribution accompanied by a cheap advertising campaign. No wonder the public regards a science fiction, fantasy or horror film just slightly higher than a trash barrel. Kubrick broke ground and laid the foundation, but Lucas has built the structure and even expanded it, for everyone is going to see STAR WARS, not just regular filmgoers and science fiction fans. Perhaps producers will now realize that the public is ready for, and wants quality science fiction and fantasy films.

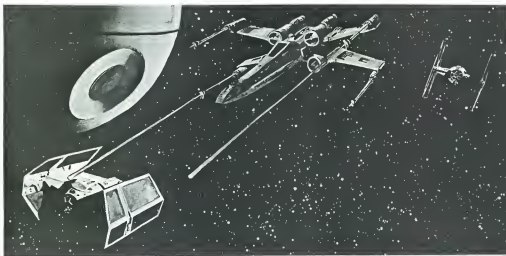
At last count Star Wars had reached one hundred and forty million dollars, just in the United States. It is scheduled to open overseas in mid-October, so the STAR WARS phenomenon has just begun! Wow.

TOP RIGHT: Darth Vader and Obi-Wan duel to the death. TOP MIDDLE: Han Solo disguised as a stormtrooper. TOP BOTTOM: C3PO (Anthony Daniels) and R2D2. BOT: TOM: Another McQuarrie painting showing the Millennium Falcon near the Death Star, under attack by a Tie fighter.



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW: JOHN DYKSTRA

supervisor of miniatures and special photographic effects for the space fantasy epic—star wars



John Dykstra



Special photos by William Speer.

Perhaps the best way to introduce John Dykstra to our readers is through his own words, spoken at a seminar at Memphis State University, sponsored by Motion Picture Labs of Memphis the last weekend in July. Dykstra, supervisor of miniatures and special photographic effects on STAR WARS, spoke of his involvement with the project.

"Regarding STAR WARS—I'll give you a rough synopsis of what went on. I met George Lucas roughly two years ago; we discussed his script, which at that time was called 'THE STAR WARS, big change, and asked me if I wanted to do the special effects. Being unknown, of course I said YES. We didn't really exactly know what they were going to be. His initial concept was that he wanted something very quick and dirty. He wanted something we could grind out quickly and cheaply.

"As we went on discussing and storyboarding the film, he said, 'I see we're not going to be able to do this with men in black suits with models on sticks and we're going to have to make something more sophisticated do.' And that's when we

started designing all the cameras and stuff. We set about doing the effects for this show with one piece of film, which was our storyboard, which was the battle sequence at the end of the film.

"We had this black and white material that he'd taken off of TV and any place he could get it, of World War II battle footage. 16mm, set up watching a movie, and look at a P-38 being chased by the enemy and then make the storyboard plotting into a P-38 changed into an X-wing and the enemy plane into a Tie ship. We had 345 of those to start out with. Some shots required more than one board. Anyway, those covered a fair sized wall.

"At that point I said, 'This is going to be hard to do in a year, George' and he said, 'I don't care kid, just do it.' So, we did it. I hired people who were young, people who had not really had a lot of industry experience, but were talented people, people that I'd worked with before. And we formed a group that was cooperative and I can't stress that enough—cooperative. People I knew as friends, people I'd worked with that I could talk to, and that was the key to the

operation, and they deserve equal credit for what went on there. Without that kind of cooperation you end up with memo...Paint the Tie ship blue, right? That goes through three people's hands and a week later the Tie ship comes out blue. It couldn't be done that way. It had to be a hand-on, face-to-face. What are we going to do about this problem? situation. And that's why a background, a versatile and liberal background is really great because each of the people that I worked with within their specific group, they're great, they're very talented within their specific area, field...but they also know enough about all the other aspects of film-making to be able to cooperate and integrate with the other people they're working with. So...the cameramen doesn't go to the model department and say, "This ship won't work because you built it wrong," they got together beforehand and said, "What are the problems you have, what are your needs, what does the model have to look like, and the guy who's taking pictures says, 'Well, it has to be like this, and what can I do to help you? What can I tell you so we don't have changes later?' That's the kind of cooperation you have with that."

And very cooperative and friendly was John Dykstra Saturday, July 30, when FANTASY FILM JOURNAL interviewed him. Some of the questions asked in this interview were asked by others standing by during the interview, but for the sake of clarity, all questions are credited from one source.



John Dykstra, the editor, and the President and General Manager of Motion Picture Lab of Memphis, Frank McGaary.

FFJ: In the opening sequence where the Imperial starship flies over and has their tractor-beam drawing the Rebel blockade runner into it...is the blockade runner a smaller one than first seen on the screen? Are there two different sized runners?

JD: No, actually, it's the big one. The big one is the one drawn in. The opening shot uses a little tiny one, because we couldn't get the big one far enough away to get it small. So we made one that was about twelve inches long for the opening shot...the one that comes in over the camera and zooms away. This Star Destroyer is about three feet long, the one that comes in overhead and the ship that's drawn up into that cavity is about six feet long.

FFJ: Six feet long. So it's just photographically reduced in size to fit up in that cavity.

JD: Yeah, it's just a composite, we...

FFJ: The shadow was so nice on the runner, as it was drawn into that cavity.

JD: Oh yeah, well, the shadow was just a big scrim that we timed out to make sure that the shadow dropped at the time it went in up in under the other ship.

The Rebel blockade runner was originally intended to be the pirate ship. It was to be the protagonist of all the models and as it turned out, George Lucas thought it looked too much like "1999". A very expensive ship for the three shots it was in. I was very pleased with it. When we set about building the model, we decided that we were going to put "practical

lighting" in, meaning that we were going to include light in the miniatures so that we wouldn't have to go back at a later date and try to animate light in. Another factor involved is that because we were using continuous motion photography, everything streaks and if you don't have the lights in on the initial pass, that streak will not appear. It will look very, very animated if you try to put it in as an enhancement at a later time.

FFJ: There's one scene in the final battle above the Death Star where an odd shadow seems to appear at the bottom left of the screen just after an X-fighter explodes. What was that?

JD: A bad composite. A bad matte composite, yes...don't ever see that part again...[laughter] Yeah, if you sit and watch it very carefully, you'll see a lot of flaws in it. There's bad matte lines from time to time...but there's so many composites that have six or seven elements in it and they're all done in separation and each of those separations and each of the elements require four or five mattes...

FFJ: I must say, having seen it six times, it is one of the few films I've seen with so few flaws. You may know there are flaws there, but...

JD: Yes [laughter]...thank you very much.

FFJ: After six times I still can't see them. In the opening prologue, the type flowing from the bottom of the screen to the top, how did you shoot that?

JD: I just used a wide-angle lens with a tilting lens board. We put the artwork, which was just flat artwork on a light box, on the floor, doesn't really matter

where you put it, it was on the floor, and then use the 15mm lens, and a tilting lens board to hold depth-of-field, and just peel the camera up from the bottom of the frame...so it's just forced perspective by use of a wide-angle lens and a tilting lens board. The reason it looked good is because with VistaVision, the wide format, a 15mm lens gives you almost 180 degree field of view diagonally, as opposed to conventional 35, which is more on the order of 110. We used all Nikon lenses and that lens is very sharp and gives incredible depth-of-field.

FFJ: What cameras did you use?

JD: We built the cameras. "Dykstraflex." Read the AMERICAN CINEMATOGRAPHER (July 1977) article, it's all in there.

FFJ: You say you're doing a TV show now, do you foresee any features in the future?

JD: Oh yeah, a lot of them.

FFJ: I mean in the immediate, foreseeable future.

JD: No, I don't have anything in the immediate future, no names.

FFJ: Is there going to be a STAR WARS sequel?

JD: I don't know. It's going to be a movie [laughter]. I don't know. They could combine...they could do it before...they could do it after, or they could do the two together. And I think they'd be smart if they did the two together. It should be a serial motion picture.

Nothing has been done on a sequel. I believe there are scripts around, but they haven't gotten into it heavily yet

at all.

FFJ: You said earlier you didn't think they were going to use you on a sequel...

JD: I don't know that they will use me. I haven't... I've talked to them, I say, "Listen, you guys want me to do this or not? Cause I'm going to do this... I'm going to produce this tv show if you're not interested in having me do that," and they said, "We don't know what we're going to do."

FFJ: They're crazy if they don't use you.

JD: Well, that's okay, they're crazy. Some of 'em...and maybe I don't want to do it.

FFJ: Well, if you want to do it, then they're crazy if they don't use you because you did a spectacular job.

JD: Thank you.

FFJ: One question concerning the laser guns used to blast everybody away. Were they built around actual firing mechanisms?

JD: Yeah, they were real guns.

FFJ: I was wondering about the difficulty of choreographing such laser battles without some way of indicating the laser weapon had been fired at a particular person at a particular time. I mean, did they yell "Bang, bang, you're dead?" Then suddenly I noticed they fired smoke, and there was a lot of smoke.

JD: They were real guns. I can't remember what the name of the real gun was, but it was an assault weapon. It's an English army assault weapon of some kind, modified. They were modified, I

believe they used acetylene...an oxyacetylene flesh mechanism. They didn't fire powder.

FFJ: What about the light sabers?

JD: Oh, the sabres. Well, some of those were animated. When Luke was in the pirate ship fighting what they called the "remote", that was animated basically, the sword was, and the little remote was a double exposure, well, not a double exposure, it was matted in. For the most part they were just retro-reflective screen, front projection material, on long rods that rotated. Strips of it, so that it gave it a flicker. And then they put a beam splitter in front of the camera that bounced the light off the beam splitter and you have about two hundred times the reflectivity of normal light and so it flares at that point, but you don't see the light on the rest of the shot because of the adjustment.

FFJ: One of the most beautiful shots, to me, was the Millennium Falcon beeping out of the Death Star and making that 180 degree turn.

JD: Yeah, wasn't that cute (laughter)?

FFJ: That was one thing about Kubrick's 2001 that bothered me. Many of the ships were so two dimensional, flat, almost unrealistic in a sense, like cut-outs, and it was so nice in STAR WARS to see all sides of a ship at one time...

JD: Wasn't that funny, yeah. Jesus Christ, I hated it...oh.

FFJ: You did?

JD: Yeah, it was hard...hard, but it worked. It's just...it just became a problem to do everything like that, I mean, if you're going to see all sides of the ships, where you gonna hang it?

FFJ: That scene was so beautiful, that when I first saw it, I just sat there and thought, Good Grief, how did he do that? I knew the complexity of such a shot, I was amazed.

JD: We saved him. Lucas wrote himself in to a corner on that one. That was funny. He came to me and he goes, "Listen, we've got this problem with the script. Well, we had them drawn in with a tractor beam, right? How they gonna get away? They gonna back out? Right, that doesn't make much sense." Yeah...it worked! Cause we put that little flash there (making a "screaching to a halt" noise), we were hoping it would do it.

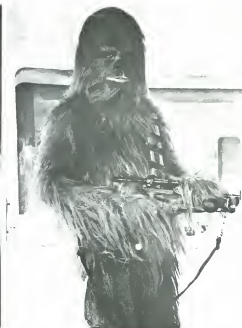
FFJ: It added so much realism to it. One other thing - how was the lens-spacer done, Luke's craft?

JD: Oh, that was just a mirror. A mirror was mounted directly underneath the flange on the...just above the ground, in fact, most of the time it was touching.

FFJ: It just reflected the ground?

JD: It just reflected the ground back up into it. It wasn't quite as simple as it sounds.

LEFT: John Dykstra and the editor. RIGHT: Peter Mayhew as Chewbacca the hundred year old Wookiee.



FFJ: How about the scene where it went from the camera to the horizon into Mos Eisley and then through the streets of Mos Eisley?

JD: Where you saw all around it. Oh, that was roto... It had to be rotoed (rotoscoped). But look, they went to Tunisia, right? They said, okay, we need the landspeeder coming in here, and it's a little Reliant, a little English car... three wheeler. And they've got this little English car bouncing along, okay, now... first of all, it's bad enough that they didn't make it a locked-off shot, it's a pan, okay. Secondly, they've got people walking in front of it, the foreground. Alright, thirdly, it has to go against a light grey background. So, how are you going to deal with that? So we ended up with a piece of film that we had to fix. "Here, fix this!" Aw, okay, sure!

FFJ: I guess you had a lot of that?

JD: Well, not too much. They were very good about what they did and the English crews were great. They were really cooperative and helpful.

FFJ: Was there ever any other ending planned, other than the one used? It just seemed to end so suddenly, all at once, with "sequel" written all over it.

JD: Well, it's a serial ending, right, but it's not...

FFJ: Was that intended because of a sequel?

JD: Well, I, yes and no. I mean, basically what he (Lucas) wanted was a Buck Rogers feel, and that had a Buck Rogers feel to it. You watch the first eight episodes of Buck Rogers, and then there's nothing else that happens. It's like any other ending, it's like there's... they end the movie and they leave you hanging.

FFJ: It seemed as though there should be another five minutes, a little more dialogue.

JD: Another five minutes, are you kidding me (looking incredulous)?

FFJ: Well, you wanted another two hours.

JD: COULD YOU GIVE ME ANOTHER FIVE MINUTES? Why SURE, what do you want them to do?

FFJ: Why, anything...

JD: You want to know what happens? Luke turns gay, which is okay because C-3PO was always the same (laughter all around.) No, I agree, it left you hanging, that was the point of the thing.

FFJ: I liked it like that, really. If left you with such an exhilarating feeling. It left you feeling so good.

JD: Gee whiz... no, you're right, I liked it too. I only saw it once. I didn't see that much of it. I saw all of the effects, of course, MILLIONS OF TIMES, but I had not seen any edited material. What I loved about it... it was totally unpretentious. It never takes itself seriously, but it's still a fantasy, an adventure. Errol Flynn in space, I love it, I mean, it's like the old pirate movies you used to watch.

FFJ: It's everything you wanted as a kid, EVERYTHING.

JD: The good guys have a hard time, but they're ingenious and they win and somehow they never get killed.

FFJ: Yes, realistically they should have

TOP: Alec Guinness as Obi-Wan, defends young Luke with the light sabre. MIDDLE: A better shot of that sequence with Chewbacca in the background. BOTTOM: The light sabre duel between Darth Vader and Obi-Wan. This shot gives a good look at the hilt of the light sabre minus the animated "glow".



TOP: A Tusken Raider, one of the Sandpeople. **MIDDLE:** Disguised as Empire stormtroopers, Luke and Han escort Chewbacce to the detention cell deep in the Death Star in their effort to rescue Princess Leia. **BOTTOM:** Luke, Han and the Princess discuss their escape as Chewbacce considers the sanity of the operation.



been killed at the beginning of the film.

JD: The bloody remains of C-3PO lying across the dead stormtrooper in the opening shot, right?

FFJ: It seems as though it was made specifically for science fiction and fantasy fans.

JD: It was made for kids. It was made for twelve year olds, in fact.

FFJ: Well, a lot of them are science fiction fans and there's a kid in all of us.

JD: I know, that's obvious and that's a marketing plan, right? That's beautiful. Absolute broad appeal. Appealing to the kid in all of us is what it was designed to do. And that's okay, because you don't feel so bad about spending your money after you go see it. It's called getting your money's worth.

FFJ: It's like SF fans and kids gave Lucas a list of exactly what we've always wanted to see...

JD: Well, he borrowed so effectively from almost all science fiction, nobody can bust him too bad for everything. He did cover a lot of things. It's going to be very hard to do a space series without getting into a STAR WARS syndrome...what're you going to do? Oh, there WAS another ending to the film. Originally, Luke had a hand-to-hand battle with Darth Vader. That wasn't used.

FFJ: That was saved for a sequel?

JD: No, it would have been the same kind of thing. Vader probably would have escaped, somehow.

FFJ: FILM COMMENT criticized the film for building the light sabers up for some monumental duel to come and then Luke didn't even use his.

JD: That film had so much stuff in it, that if you want to go through it, pick a spot, you can find fault with almost every part of it. You can do that with almost every shot. If you look carefully frame by frame. And I'm not knocking FILM COMMENT for what they said, because I agree, that would have improved it, but the point is...

FFJ: He's nit-picking.

JD: Sure he's nit-picking. What else is he going to do?

FFJ: There's so much good about STAR WARS, one would have to nit-pick to find something bad.

JD: It's so difficult to find fault with the film as a total.

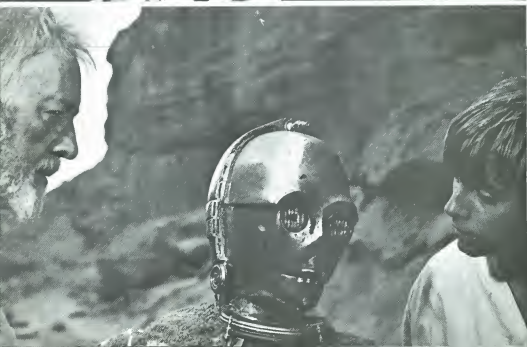
FFJ: What I'm hoping for now is, in the second or third film, having established that Darth Vader killed Luke's father, e knock-down, drag out light sabre duel between Luke and Vader, to the death. One of the problems is that it is hard to choreograph light sabre duels because if you get the sabres fifteen degrees off axis to the light, they disappear. It becomes a problem.

FFJ: No, the viewer accepts that as an inherent problem with a light sabre!

JD: (Laughter) Due to their gyroscopic action they can only...once you start swinging, you can only swing in that one plane. That's particularly good. Makes it difficult to perry.

FFJ: As Lucas says, it's his own universe, he can do anything he wants.

JD: Oh yeah, and he did, too, right?



Yeah...space craft had wings and made noise, I love it.

FFJ: Who cared? It was exciting! That's what he wanted and that's what he got.

Did you ever think STAR WARS was going to be as big a success as it has become?

JD: Half way through the film I knew it was going to be a success. It's true, I really thought it was going to be good. I figured it was going to make its money back and as far as I was concerned that made it a success.

FFJ: But \$53 million in six weeks?

JD: I don't know, right? I mean, it's always a crap-shoot, there's no way of saying. It was a relatively unusual film, but I liked it and I liked the concept of it and I liked the way it was being put together. I think Lucas did a good job. I mean, what it boils down to, whatever the property, if you have a team of good people, even a bad property can be put together so it's good. And the greatest property in the world can be put together so it's crap, because it only takes one or two people to screw it up. We had a good crew of people, a good team.

FFJ: What did you do on *ANDROMEDA STRAIN* and *SILENT RUNNING*?

JD: *ANDROMEDA STRAIN* - I worked on one shot. In *SILENT RUNNING* I did the majority of the special effects photography, all of the stuff for the ship, and I worked on the design of the space ship. I was one of several people who worked on the design of the space ship.

FFJ: Then should it have been *SILENT RUNNING* starring John Dykstra?

JD: No, not at all, not at all. No, listen, that was the first movie I worked on. That's one of the things that gets real hard, cause if you get into it too heavy on that level you end up cutting your own throat. People expect miracles, and then if you can't perform them you lose your "star" status real quick.

FFJ: In such a film the real star is often the effects, but on *STAR WARS* there was just SO much you couldn't point the finger at the effects, or any one certain effect, and call it the true star of the film. There was so much to go around.

JD: Yeah, there was. He (Lucas) threw so much away. He threw it away in the sense that he put a lot of material on the screen that other directors might have left on the screen for twice or three times as long because it took so bloody much for the shot. But the way he worked it out, he just tossed it away. I mean, every time you go see it there's something going on in the background and that's one of the things I wanted to do was to make sure it had motion in the background



TOP: Luke, C3PO and R2D2, **BOTTOM:** Obi-Wan as he attempts to disengage the tractor beam holding the Millennium Falcon in the Death Star. Guinness is actually only six feet off the stage floor; the illusion of height was attained through the use of a glass painting shot.

all the time. There was always something realistic that added perspective to it and gave you a foreground piece to deal with and something else that made it so you knew your eye was attracted to what was going on in the foreground.

FFJ: How much did each of the models (X-fighters, etc.) cost?

JD: Well, we built the facility, we built the models, we did injection molding machines and vacuum forming machines and all that technology was put to all of the models. I think they were insured for \$30,000 apiece. That's probably what it would cost to build one from scratch. If you sat down to build an X-wing with some plastic and model kits. That's probably pretty reasonable, too. They had a lot of articulation and they had little motors that made the wings X in the scene where the wings opened and they had an air umbilical that went in to them to provide for the lights and the engines in the back and all that stuff, so, they were pretty articulate little beauties.

FFJ: How big was the Death Star?

JD: It came in a variety of sizes...king size (laughter). No, there were a whole bunch of different ones. Some of the surfaces were photographs applied to a big flat board thing with forced perspective. Some of them were the model itself that was a large scale...the trench-like...the portion you saw in the trench. The trench was sixty feet long, about four feet deep and three feet wide.

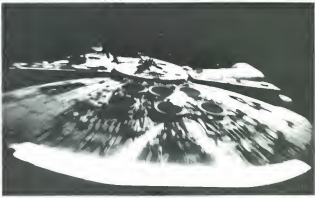
FFJ: That was an incredible shot where the camera zoomed across the surface of the Death Star, turned and dove into the trench and sped along it, all in one continuous shot.

JD: That was a neat shot, that started out by photographing a move into the trench and it wasn't from high enough up because we didn't have enough material to cover the frame. So then what we did was we moved back in an animation sense off of a ... took the first frame of the shot that was usable in motion off the eight perf, and then blew that up and used the swings and tilts on an enlarger to force the perspective of the print to match exactly the angle that we wanted to see going in and then set that up on a flat artwork on a board and backed away from that and matched the speeds of the two, up by trial and error, to where we got a smooth transition and we still had to put that flash in there. I mean, it didn't quite work. It was close though. I was amazed. That was one of the shots Disney was very upset about. They couldn't figure out how we did it. I told them but they didn't believe me. You tell people but they don't believe you. It was all done with mirrors.

FFJ: Concerning the explosions. You had to overcrank because of the use of miniatures. How much overcranking did you do?

JD: There's a pretty simple ratio for that. In a real sense, theoretically what you should do if the explosion...we tried to make slow explosions but slow explo-

OPPOSITE PAGE TOP: Chewbacca and R2D2 play holographic chess as C3PO looks on. The chess pieces are animated. BOTTOM: The light sabre duel between Obi-Wan and Darth Vader. TOP THIS PAGE: Upon their escape from the Death Star, Imperial Tie Fighters begin their attack on the Millennium Falcon. MIDDLE: A view from the attacking Tie fighter. BOTTOM: A side view of the same attack, in which you might be able to pick out the matte lines around the Tie fighters, if the reproduction has been good enough.





TOP: Chewbacca and Princess Leia commend the Millennium Falcon as the pirate ship is attacked by Tie fighters. MIDDLE: David Prowse as Darth Vader attempts to force information from the captain of the rebel blockade runner. BOTTOM: A close-up of Chewbacca.



sions are really burning and when you get into burning you make smoke, so you have to use a fast explosion to get away from the smoke. Let's assume for the moment the explosion you use, is equivalent in speed to a real-sized explosion. The proportion is really simple. If you are at one-tenth scale, but the explosion is travelling the same speed as real time, you've got to overcrank ten times. Ten times is fast, now that's hard, so what you do is fake it. And you overcrank to 150, it's the best you can get. We used a VistaVision high-speed camera, what a relic, what a beautiful relic. I wanted to cast it in acrylic and have it for a coffee table. It ran 100 frames a second...it was a marvel. It was incredible. We hung it from wires and slung it down, rode it down over the Death Star. We took it and ran it every conceivable way and it ran beautifully. It was just a beautiful piece of equipment.

FFJ: What about the jump into "hyperspace"?

JD: That's streak photography. Basically it was real simple. That was one of the few shots that was done by hand, basically. You open the shutter and you move the camera forward, thereby streaking the stars on the film. Alright, each time you advance it a little bit further, so that on the succeeding frame, the streak is a little longer. Eventually the streak extends all the way to the edge of the film. That's done simply by taking the camera, opening the shutter and moving it in, closing the shutter, then stopping. Then backing it up, point to the next frame, moving a little bit further this time, and then stopping, backing it up...it's very tedious, very time consuming and very simple. It wasn't particularly innovative, but everybody likes it for some reason.

FFJ: Did you have much to do with the ABC special on "THE MAKING OF STAR WARS" due to air September 16?

JD: It hasn't even been shot yet (July 30). They're supposed to shoot on the eighth. No, it hasn't been done yet, but they always do that with tv stuff.

FFJ: How does Universal, your current employer, feel about STAR WARS, since they initially turned it down?

JD: I am working for Universal now, and that's one of the big jokes around there, "That's the one we turned down." I thought they were real clever with KING KONG though, getting a percentage of the Paramount film. Not doing their own end reking in profits, although it was rated as a failure at the boxoffice.

FFJ: How did you get started? Where were you trained?

JD: I learned from Doug Trumbull. Photographic stuff I was interested in when I was in school and I did a lot of still photography and I was playing at that time with separations and posterizations and solarizations, and so that background gave me a good lead-in to doing stuff for SILENT RUNNING, which Doug basically turned over to me. And having worked with him on various things I started to get



the idea. But basically it's like anything else, you just have to be innovative, you've got to know mechanics, you've got to know film, and on down the line.

FFJ: What was it like to work for Doug Trumbull?

JD: Oh, he's a nice guy. He's my friend. He's great. He's got a real good attitude. He's not a weirdo or anything. He's a good man and is free with his knowledge, he's not stingy with the things he knows.

FFJ: Do you think his new film, *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND* will be a lot of rezzle-dazzle?

JD: It's going to be a good movie. There's not so many miniatures, there's an awful lot of matte art and an awful lot of streak photography, but it'll be unusual. It'll be different from *STAR WARS* in many ways, in a vast number of ways. It'll be good.

FFJ: What about your TV series?

JD: I'm producing the series. It's space — space stuff, but there's no script yet. The pilot should be out in January. We've got six months to do the scripts, and shoot the effects and do all the live-action. It wouldn't be bad for a regular TV series, but it's very tight to do something that's going to have so much in special effects.

FFJ: Do you believe the success of *STAR WARS* will lead to better quality science fiction films?

JD: I would hope so. I'll tell you what, the thing that scares me the most about this is that it's such a phenomenon that there are going to be twenty million people coming up with effects movies. And those movies are going to be made by people who will make them for whatever dollars they can make them for, alright? I think what you're going to find is that there's going to be a real rash of grade B special effects movies. My fear is, that because of that, you're going to end up with a general degradation of that whole area and a hesitancy on the part of people with money to back another big special effects show. Because if bad stuff comes out, people are going to stop going to see them, and that's what I'm scared of. I see high quality special effects films coming out but I see so many B movies coming out that it scares me. In fact, that's one of the reasons that I'm very selective about the things that I choose to do and I know Doug (Trumbull) is the same way because we don't want to work on stuff we don't believe in, and I'm not a philosopher, but, it's really true, you have to like the property and feel it's entertaining and you have to feel people are going to enjoy it before you can settle down to working on it, otherwise you're going to have just reel bad stuff out.

FFJ: Is your warehouse (Industrial Light and Magic Corporation) still in existence?

JD: Yes. It's full of slot cars. It's still in Van Nuys, we'll use it on the TV show probably.

FFJ: What was the budget for the special effects?

JD: I would guess roughly \$2.2 million was spent on the effects. The reason I say that is that is what I budgeted it at initially, and I was told they'd never go for it, so we dropped the budget, and then later "YOU WENT OVER BUDGET" but that's what I said before, so it was about that. \$2.2 to \$2.5 million, total show costing somewhere in the neighborhood of \$10 million.

FFJ: How do you feel about *FLASH GORDON* and *BUCK ROGERS* saying *STAR WARS* owes it all to them? I agree that you have a worry that some lower class material could damage what you've done. How do you feel about *FLASH GORDON* and *BUCK ROGERS* saying "We're coming back and are going to flood the market"? Does that bother you?

JD: *FLASH GORDON* and *BUCK ROGERS* are owned by, one of them is owned by Universal, so I mean, basically, if *Flash Gordon* and *Buck Rogers* could embody themselves here and point their finger at me, I might worry about it, but I don't see that as a problem. It stands on its own merit. I've given up worrying about that politic, okay? I don't care what I owe to them. I owe what I know to everybody I've ever encountered, but then again, I can't go giving those credits. Seriously, my life is a result of my background knowledge that came from the people

that I've worked with and met, so I say fine, I agree. In fact, Lucas says that he did that. He borrowed so heavily from so many of the science fiction stories, book, film, otherwise, that is around, that it makes it impossible to fault him for borrowing, because he's done so much of it, but it works! And it is put together in a unique way. I'm not worrying about *FLASH GORDON* and *BUCK ROGERS* coming back because they can only, if they're done well, and I think that concept is what we're talking about, not actually *Buster Crabbe*, or the people who were *Buck Rogers* or that shape of ship, it's that idea of not so much the serial, but an action-packed adventure movie, and that's really what *STAR WARS* was. That's really what *BUCK ROGERS* was and that's really what *Errol Flynn* was when he was a pirate, right? Things that you can sit down and watch and become involved in, root for the good guys, or the bad guys if you're weird, and enjoy. I think that's what I think we're going to have. I don't think *FLASH GORDON* or *BUCK ROGERS* is going to change that. I think if they bring them back out and they're good, they're just going to enhance it. I mean, I like those better than something new, something like *BARBARELLA*. Not that that's new, but that was new then, and boy was it bad.

FFJ: Mr. Dykstra, I thank you for this interview and your time.

JD: Sure, any time. My pleasure.



THIS PAGE: Imperial stormtroopers detain Luke and Obi-Wan, questioning the two about the droids



THE MAKING OF STAR WARS

THE MAKING OF STAR WARS - A Twentieth Century Fox Television special for ABC. Produced and directed by Robert Guenette. Written by Richard Schickel. Executive producer Gary Kurtz. Aired September 16, 1977.

All three networks have attempted this season to do a "making of" special on some blockbuster film released over the summer. NBC did **THE MAKING OF A BRIDGE TOO FAR**, CBS did **THE MAKING OF THE DEEP**, and ABC did **THE MAKING OF STAR WARS**, which perhaps had the most potential of the three. I think too many people take George Lucas at his literal word when he spoke of **STAR WARS** being made for children. Surely it was, but I would say that the \$140,000,000 made as of September 17, was

not made from children's admissions. ABC's special approached their subject as if it were a Saturday morning children's show. With corny dialogue by Anthony Daniels as C3PO, the show created a silly atmosphere whereby C3PO and R2D2 told how the film was made. However, when the show shifted to actual footage and explanations regarding the making of the film, it was quite good. It clearly showed how many of the effects were done and gave good examples of the filming of the miniatures and the size of the miniatures. For the layman, a good explanation of the blue backing process was given, as well as a look at the gruesome details of a complicated movie being made.

One thing the show drove home was how difficult it must have been to film such a movie. When one views the finished print of **STAR WARS**, one is not really conscious of the many elements involved in any one shot, how complicated just any shot is. For example, the shot where Luke, Princess Leia, Han, Chewbacca and the two droids make their way to the Millennium Falcon from the interior of the Death Star, just as the stormtroopers are drawn away from the ship by the duel between Darth Vader and

Obi-Wan, the scene is first shot in natural sound, without the music, sound of the laser guns, background noise of the Death Star, the sound of R2D2 and Chewbacca, or the sound of the light saber duel between Darth Vader and Obi-Wan. It is very impressive to see how well the actors can act and pretend all those sounds are actually there and not added later by the sound department.

In line with the children's show approach, it might be interesting to note that at no time was credit given for the humans inside the costumes of Darth Vader, Chewbacca, C3PO or R2D2, although in one quick scene Peter Mayhew, minus his Chewbacca costume is seen, although not identified. All to maintain the illusion that those characters were not actors but real, which is a little silly considering the many tricks given away during the short sixty minutes.

A little silly but altogether an interesting and sometimes fascinating hour that should be done more often with other genre films.

